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ABSTRACT

An irony of the college experience is that a substantial amount of students' time and, potentially, a majority of student learning, occurs outside the classroom. Since non-classroom interaction with faculty is a central component of such learning, three studies that illuminate different facets of these interactions are presented here; they explore how student affairs professionals might collaborate with faculty to redefine student learning. The first study looks at upper-level students' perspectives on why students engage or do not engage in out-of-classroom interactions. In contrast to the first study, the second research project focused on college freshmen to determine whether frequent informal student-faculty interaction has a positive effect on college outcomes. The last study assesses the experiences of adult students and examines to what extent returning adult undergraduates become involved with and feel they matter to others, particularly faculty, in their learning environments. Following each study is a discussion of the study's relevance for student affairs practitioners and ways in which student affairs professionals can build alliances with faculty. (RJM)

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Partners in the Wilderness: Building Alliances with Faculty to Redefine Learning

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INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW

An irony of the college experience is that a substantial amount of students' time and, potentially, a majority of student learning occurs outside the classroom (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, Krehbiel, & MacKay, 1991; Boyer, 1987; Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavary, 1975). Consistently and unanimously, the literature on how college affects students has traced nonclassroom interaction with faculty to the epicenter of learning that occurs outside of class (Astin, 1993; Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, 1980). The three studies that comprise this paper illuminate different facets of these interactions to better understand how student affairs professionals, who view their roles as educators, might collaborate with faculty to redefine student learning.

The first study, **"Influential Interactions: A Study of College Students' Out-of-Classroom Encounters with Faculty"** by Kristie Daniel DiGregorio is the first to offer *students' perpectives* on why students engage or do not engage in out-of-classroom interactions. Students are believed to be the primary initiators of out-of-classroom interactions between students and faculty. So, the student perspective on the factors that either encourage or discourage the interactions can guide student affairs professionals on how they might most effectively intervene to encourage their occurrence. The research also asked, "What factors make these interactions meaningful to students?" and "Do students report outcomes of the interactions?"

In contrast to the first study which examined students' reflections as they were preparing to complete their college degrees, the second study**, "Informal Student-Faculty Interactions and Freshman Year Outcomes"** by Candace Ennesser Passi, focused on undergraduate students in their first year: during orientation week then again during the third and final quarter the freshman year. The study examined whether frequent informal student-faculty interaction has a positive effect on college outcomes, what perceptions

and expectations college students have concerning faculty, how residence arrangements affect college outcomes, and the effectiveness of a freshman advising program.

The third study, **"Does it Matter to Matter? The Role of Involvement and Mattering for Returning Adult Undergraduate Students"** by Miriam Rosalyn Diamond examines an entirely different dimension of student-faculty interaction by assessing the experiences of *adult students*. The study asked the following questions: "To what extent do returning adult undergraduates become involved with and feel they matter to others - particularly faculty - in their learning environments? Do the amounts and types of interaction with faculty have an impact on student satisfaction with and commitment to complete their degrees? Are these conditions affected by the structure provided by colleges and programs? What are the implications for resource allocation and prioritization in adult degree programs?

Following the overviews of each of the three studies, the authors conclude by identifying the relevance of the research for student affairs practitioners and ways in which student affairs professionals can build alliances with faculty to redefine learning.

Influential Interactions:
A Study of College Students' Out-of-Classroom Encounters with Faculty

Kristie Daniel DiGregorio, Ph.D.

Review of the Literature

As studies of the undergraduate experience have discovered, much of students' college experience falls outside the boundaries of the classroom (Kuh, Schuh, Whitt, Andreas, Lyons, Strange, Krehbiel, & MacKay, 1991; Boyer, 1987; Wilson, Gaff, Dienst, Wood, & Bavary, 1975). The research on college student outcomes suggests that when students spend some of their time outside of class with faculty, for example, in an advising session, as a continuation of class discussion or during office hours, that the effects of those interactions can span a lifetime: students' commitment to completing college, their intellectual and personal development during the college experience, and their aspirations for beyond college can be significantly affected by these relationships (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Pascarella, 1980; Astin, 1977; Astin, 1993). Therefore, some researchers have asserted that the most important teaching takes place outside of class (Wilson, et al, 1975). What remains unknown is how these influential interactions develop.

Previous research has indicated that students are the primary initiators of student-faculty interactions outside of class, so the student perspective, previously unexplored, is essential to understanding how these interactions develop (Kuh, et al, 1991). Correlational data exists on the qualities of faculty and students most likely to interact out-of-class, but no research has explained the interplay of these qualities that draw students into out-of-class interaction (Wilson, et al, 1975). Also, faculty and students have indicated that these potentially influential interactions occur infrequently, a fact with which students report dissatisfaction (Wilson, et al, 1975; Kuh, et al, 1991; Astin, 1993; Follett, Andberg, & Hendle, 1982). As Pascarella, Terenzini, and Blemling (1996) concluded after their extensive review of the literature on out-of-class experiences, "Student-faculty contact and student learning are positively related and it would seem

that finding ways to promote such contact is in the best educational interests of both students and institutions" (p. 155).

Research Questions

The unanswered questions about out-of-classroom interactions between students and faculty were the focus of this study. First, little is known about why students do or do not choose to spend some of their out-of-classroom hours in contact with their faculty. So, the first research question is: *Why do students engage or not engage in out-of-classroom interaction with faculty?* Second, there are a number of reasons that students might initiate contact with their faculty members -- which interactions are most likely to yield positive outcomes for students? The second research question is: *How do students describe meaningful experiences of out-of-classroom interaction with faculty?* Third, to learn more about these potentially important interactions between students and faculty, there is a need to learn more about students' own interpretations of these interactions and whether they affect their college experience. So, the third research question is: *Do students report outcomes of their out-of-class interactions with faculty?*

Research Methods

The setting was a medium-sized research university, selected because of its participation in a national, longitudinal study of student learning outcomes. The national study data made it possible to select two groups of undergraduate students in their fourth and final year of study, a "high" group and a "low" group, based on students' reported amount of out-of-classroom interaction with faculty relative to their peers. Two groups were selected because the goal was to identify reasons that students do *not* initiate interactions as well as the reasons that they do. In accordance with *maximum variation sampling*, students were selected to represent both sexes and a variety of cultural backgrounds and undergraduate schools (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data collection consisted primarily of intensive, qualitative interviews with eighteen students, interviewed 3-4 times each. The interview protocol had been

developed and tested through a pilot study with a separate sample. In the present study, students were asked to reflect on their out-of-classroom interactions with faculty, describing specific events and reflecting on the immediate and cumulative impact of those events. For the purposes of the study, out-of-class interactions were defined as any conversation of at least fifteen minutes in length that occurred outside of class meeting time. The time limit was imposed so that brief exchanges of information such as, "Here's my paper" were excluded; conversations may have begun as brief exchanges but to be included in the study they must have extended beyond that.

Interviews with faculty and administrator informants and document analysis of internal materials triangulated the interview data and facilitated understanding of the institutional setting. Measures were taken to insure the *trustworthiness*, or soundness, of the study (e.g., by implementing *member checks* with student respondents to confirm and correct emerging themes, by providing an *audit trail* of all notes and materials from data collection and analysis) (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Data analysis consisted of *unitizing* and *coding* with the assistance of FolioVIEWS textbased manager (Miles & Huberman, 1984; Weitzman & Miles, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Unitizing involved identifying each of the smallest pieces of information in the interviews, whether the unit was a phrase, sentence, or paragraph. Coding involved naming or labeling the units based on the phenomena they represented. Initially, codes were defined narrowly and then similar or related codes that clustered around common ideas were grouped into overarching *themes*. These themes were combined through analysis to yield the four final research themes.

Findings

Three of the research themes -- **points of contact**, **student characteristics** and **faculty characteristics** -- address the complex processes of how out-of-classroom interactions between student and faculty are facilitated or discouraged, answering the first research question: "Why do students engage or not engage in out-of-class interactions

with faculty?" Regarding **points of contact** (settings in which students encountered faculty and which influenced the occurrence of out-of-class interactions), the size of students' classes was central in determining if they would interact with faculty out-of-class -- large classes invariably deterred students from initiating interactions, especially in their first year of college. Students noted,

> You're just a face - you know, it's the whole numbers thing...There's a sense of being lost. It's so huge.

> I think that relationships with professors outside of the classroom can be difficult in large settings. Large lecture halls it's going to be so difficult to remember the students' names, much less the professor's first name sometimes. You may not feel for any reason, "Why would I want to get to know this person outside of class?"

In contrast to large classes, small classes established connections between the respondents and faculty, connections that made the respondents feel more comfortable initiating contact with faculty outside of class. One respondent explained why he had more out-of-classroom contact with his faculty the last year of college,

> My classes have gotten smaller. Earlier ones were the huge ones. Maybe it's because I feel more I'm in the room with the professor.

Because of the connection that previous research has established between student-faculty interactions and academic outcomes, this suggests that class size has the potential to affect college student outcomes, such as learning and intellectual development.

Electronic mail, a relatively new point of contact not addressed in previous research, encouraged student-faculty interaction by offering a more convenient and less intimidating mode for students to initiate interaction with faculty. Using email offered students a chance to test the waters with faculty: they could compose their thoughts, and they didn't have to interrupt the faculty since faculty could respond when it was convenient for them. Students explained the advantages of email:

> What I have done a lot more recently is I'll email them and then go in and talk to them. So that it's sort of like you have the basics before you ever go talk to them.
>
> One advantage is you can figure out what you want to say before you send it. And you can edit if you want to.
>
> I just asked it as, "If you have room, could I come talk to you sometime?" This way I didn't bother them in their office hours and they can respond at their leisure.

Perhaps most importantly, students who reported being too intimidated to initiate interaction in person were able to have frequent contact with their faculty through electronic mail.

The two central **student characteristics** that determined if students initiated interaction with faculty included whether students were new to college and whether they believed they had a need for interaction (e.g., a problem or question). Respondents pointed to the importance of providing opportunities for first-year students to interact with faculty since this is when respondents reported feeling most intimidated by faculty -- faculty seemed impersonal and inaccessible compared to high school teachers.

> When I got to college, it was like a whole different ball game. That was my first impression and my first expectation of faculty was that they really can't do too much and I'm going to have to struggle and use my other resources, like tutors and stuff, but I really can't get to know the faculty.

By their senior year, many of the students were less intimidated by faculty, which they attributed to their own maturation as well as to having had positive encounters with their faculty:

> I've learned a lot of other things [from my interactions with faculty] and it's largely because I was able to interact with some faculty informally and that gave me the confidence to interact with others.

Respondents' experiences also emphasized the importance of faculty encouraging students to utilize office hours to discuss course material, so students do not think that they must have a problem to justify initiating interaction. As one student explained,

> I'd always felt that if I didn't have a specific question I wasn't going to go in and talk to them and I still really don't because I don't want to waste their time.

There were additional student characteristics that determined if students interacted with their faculty outside of class: whether students were interested in the course material, whether grades were a motivator for them, whether there was a career connection with the faculty member, whether their peers were interacting with faculty, and whether they felt they had time to interact with faculty.

Interestingly, were three possible approaches students took to initiating interactions with faculty: 1) students seemed uninterested, 2) students were interested but required some initiative from faculty, or they reluctantly initiated interaction but were strongly influenced by faculty members' responses to them, or 3) students were interested, initiated interaction, and their willingness to initiate was undeterred by negative interactions with faculty. Importantly, *most* of the students were in the second category, including many among the "low" interactors who were interested in interacting with faculty but were highly dependent on the environment and on faculty for encouragement to do so. Students in this category commented:

> I had a bad experience winter quarter with one of the faculty...I think that hurt me for a long time because I couldn't go to my professors.

> I think sometimes I'm waiting for [faculty to initiate contact with me]. One professor disappoints me or is not conducive to talking to them, then it's easier just to let it be.

Respondents' comments indicated that, in general, they perceived a gap between themselves and faculty, a gap that made the faculty at first seem not quite human.

> Professors are living in a bubble that doesn't extend beyond their office or their teaching classrooms...I think that at a university like [this] the bubble is there no matter what for all the professors. It's the question of whether or not they extend out of the bubble.

There were several ways that **faculty characteristics** signaled to students whether faculty were willing to "extend out of the bubble" to interact with students outside of class. First, related to faculty members' *roles as teachers*, when faculty seemed to make teaching a priority and were interested in their subject, when they communicated concern that students understand the material, when they challenged students, when they involved students in the teaching process, and when they extended student understanding beyond the class material to include general subject matter, they seemed more approachable to students.

> If she feels passionately about something you know that if you feel passionately about something too that you can go and talk to her. It makes her seem so much more human and definitely someone that you want to get to know.

> He's the type of person that, he won't just give you an answer...he kind of prods you and he makes you think...I feel like he really cared if you were getting along and if you were understanding the material.

Second, how faculty made their *time* available, evidenced by how they discussed and structured their office hours, affected the occurrence of interactions.

> I've had professors that will just mumble [when their office hours are] and you're like, "What? Oh, you don't want me to stop by I take it."

> When they say, "Please come to my office hours"...then you don't feel like you're intruding.

Third, whether faculty *related to students as "real" people* by communicating interest in students as individuals, by talking about themselves, by using humor, or by relating to the student perspective, affected whether students were willing to interact with them.

> I ran into one of my old instructors and I hadn't seen him in like two years...Just in the two minutes that we talked, he remembered my name, remembered what year I was, asked, "What are you going to do next year?"
>
> One quarter I went to office hours a couple of times and my professor didn't know who I was and that was very frustrating for me. I kind of got an attitude and then I didn't go to office hours the next quarter.
>
> [This professor] often uses his own life examples and telling what he was like in college and he went to [this university]. So, his stories are even more amusing because they are similar to ours. He seems more accessible because of that.

The second research question was: "How do students describe meaningful experiences of out-of-classroom interaction with faculty?" Students reported that meaningful interactions were ones that extended beyond an exchange of information which could have occurred in the classroom. They included when faculty actively encouraged students to initiate interaction, when they made significant investments of their time in students, or when they encouraged discussion that allowed student and faculty member to relate as people by talking about themselves beyond the course material. One student summarized the sentiments of many of the respondents:

> He would say..."So you're coming to see me in office hours today, right?" I wasn't planning on it but I guess I am...That was my transition from not going to professors [outside of class] and going to professors because he expected me to come.
>
> The other stuff that you're not going to get from books is where the non-classroom interaction becomes meaningful...I think with most non-classroom interaction, you do end up having some sort of agenda related to class. That's almost unavoidable. But if you can expand beyond that, if you can try to make the weak ties, your strong ties would be the classroom and the weak ties may be that this professor worked in the field in which you are interested...things that would be tangentially or weakly related [to class] would be the most meaningful.

> She's doing things that she doesn't have to do at a time when she doesn't have to spend time thinking about students.

The final research theme relates to **outcomes** and answers the research question: "Do students report outcomes of their out-of-class interactions with faculty?" Students indicated that their interactions with faculty improved their academic performance, provided valuable mentoring and networking, enhanced their self-image, and changed their views of faculty so that they saw faculty as more "real" or "human." Some of these outcomes echo findings of previous research, but this research illuminates and explains the connection between interactions and student outcomes. For example, other research has identified academic achievement and intellectual development as outcomes of interaction (e.g., Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991; Astin, 1993). Respondents in this study explained that not only did out-of-class interactions augment their learning about the material, but that the interactions enhanced students' commitment to their academic work because they then felt a personal responsibility to the professors.

> I've noticed when I have one-on-one interaction with a faculty member I feel more personally accountable for the work that I do and more motivated to get really interested.

> This class could potentially be one of the worst classes in my career...But I kinda - I want to do well cause now he knows me so I want to do well on my reports and I want to know what's going on in lab.

Conclusion

This study offers the first, in-depth exploration of students' views of how students and faculty navigate the initial distance between them to interact out-of-class. Although students reported that they typically initiated individual interactions, they consistently emphasized the vital roles faculty play in encouraging the occurrence of interactions by their behaviors and attitudes in and outside of the classroom.

Based on the findings, some recommendations for practice are suggested, for example, to maximize the number of small classes; to provide electronic mail; to encourage faculty interaction students' first year; to ask faculty to reflect on their roles as teachers in and out of the classroom; and to examine institutional reward structures for teaching.

The research goal was to understand what factors encourage or frustrate influential interactions between students and faculty so institutions can increase the frequency of these interactions. As noted, the benefits of increasing student-faculty interaction outside of class can span a lifetime for students.

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Informal Student-Faculty Interaction and Freshman Year Outcomes

Candace Ennesser Passi, Ph.D.

Abstract

Fueled by considerable student dissatisfaction which occurred in the 1960's and 1970's, seen as an impersonalization of American universities, the move was ignited to re-establish the belief that college is an important institution for learning, not only for knowledge

acquisition, but also for fostering "inculcation of certain attitudes and personality orientations, the developments of a sense of 'self' and career identity, and clarification of personal values (Feldman and Newcomb, 1960).

One of the ways in which college can foster the development of student growth and learning is by allowing students the opportunity to develop relationships with faculty,

particularly those who are knowledgeable in their chosen field of study and can help students to develop their interpersonal skills, help them focus on career orientation, and assist them in getting the most they can from their educational experience.

The purpose of this study was to examine further whether interactions with faculty

outside of the formal boundaries of the classroom have an effect on freshman year outcomes in college. This study asked several questions: 1) Does frequent informal student-faculty interaction have a positive effect on college outcomes?; 2) what perceptions and expectations do college students have concerning faculty?; 3) How does residence arrangement affect college outcomes?; 4) How effective is a freshman advising program?

To answer these questions the author analyzed data from two freshman surveys students had completed. Dependent measures of academic and intellectual development,

attitudes toward faculty, educational aspirations, career certainty, and satisfaction with overall education were studied. On a more general level, students' overall academic performance, intentions, goals, and institutional commitments in relation Tinto's (1987) model of student departure, were also studied. Multiple regression was used to analyze the data.

In general, the results of this study tend to confirm Tinto's theory that informal student-faculty interaction is important to students' overall college experience. Students who experienced more frequent informal interaction tend to experience higher academic and intellectual development and have better attitudes about faculty. Students in this study who experienced more out of classroom interaction with faculty, who experienced specific types of interaction, and who experienced what was defined as "higher quality interactions", also experienced higher academic performance, intentions, goals, and institutional commitments.

Informal Student-Faculty Interaction and Freshman Year Outcomes
Candace Ennesser Passi, Ph.D.

"The task for student affairs professional is to create and nurture opportunities for faculty to engage with students beyond the formal boundaries of the classroom; to increase the value of our contributions to educational outcomes. "

I. Statement of Research Problem

A. Purpose of Study

- to examine further whether interactions with faculty outside the formal boundaries of the classroom have an effect on freshman year outcomes in college.

B. Differences from Previous Studies

- few studies have looked at outcomes of student attitudes, educational and career aspirations, and overall satisfaction with college.
- present studies offer unclear results.
- lack of research on the freshman year experience and these outcomes.
- research on the relationship between advising and freshman year outcomes is sparse.

II. Questions Addressed in This Study

A. Does frequent informal student-faculty interaction have a positive effect on college outcomes?

B. What perceptions and expectations do college students have concerning faculty?

C. How does residence arrangement affect college outcomes?

D. How effective is a freshman advising program?

III. Theoretical Framework

A. This study is built around the Vincent Tinto's theoretical model of institutional departure (1987) with some modification.

- academic integration was not measure in this study.
- persistence was not measured in this study.
- integration into the social system (i.e., involvement in extra-curricular activities) is not addressed.

IV. Method

A. Population

- 1992 freshman class in the College of Arts and Sciences at a private, elite, research university.

B. Sample & Design

- freshmen completed the CIRP pre-college survey in summer of 1992 (Astin et. al., 1992).
- freshmen completed a follow-up survey in Spring of 1993.

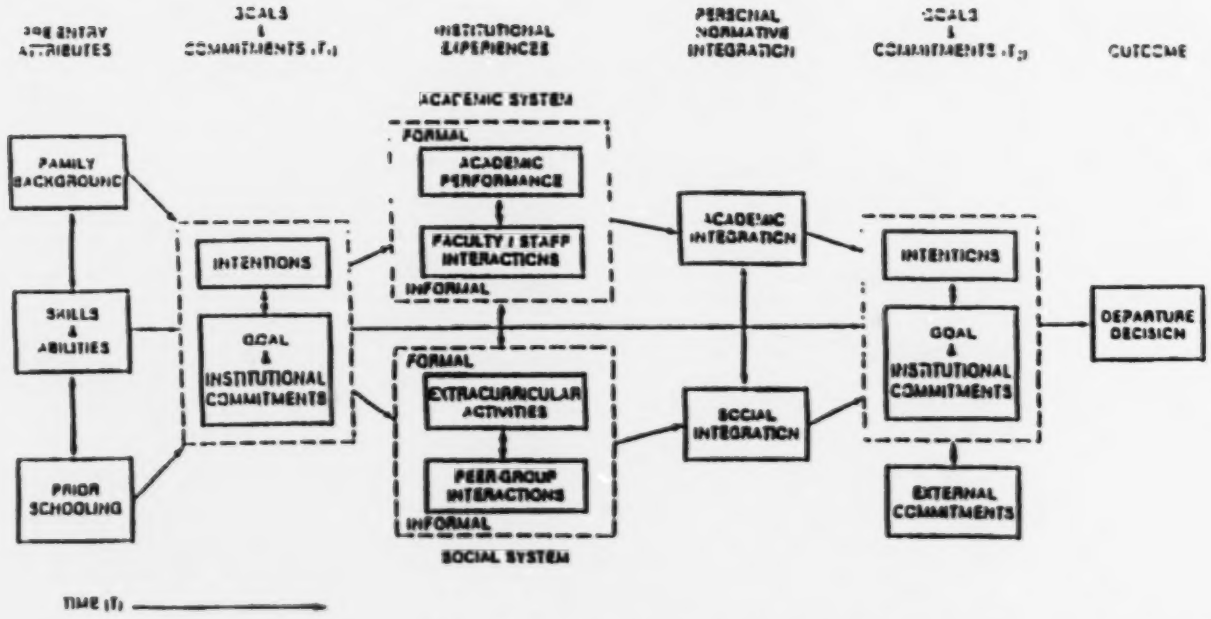

Fig. 4.1 A model of institutional departure

From Tinto, V. 1987. Leaving College. University Chicago Press

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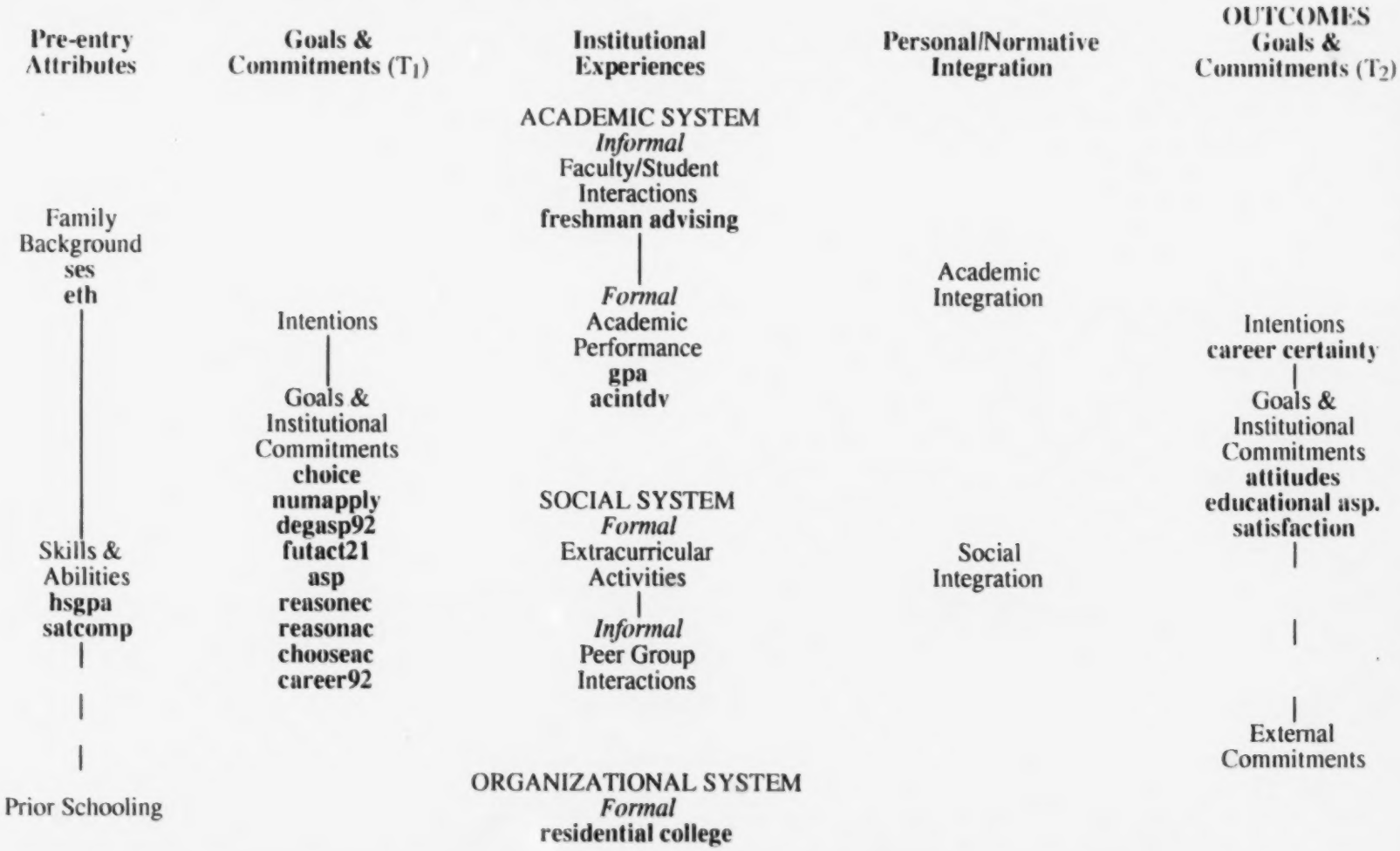
HANDOUT #2

Tinto's Model of Student Departure in Relation to this Study.[a]



[a] dotted lines represent associations that were not analyzed in this study.

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C. Variables

- dependent variables: academic and intellectual development, freshman year gradepoint average, attitudes about faculty, educational aspirations, career certainty, and overall satisfaction with education.
- independent variables: overall frequency of informal student-faculty interaction, frequency of each type of informal interaction, quality of informal interaction.
- supplemental independent variables: residence arrangement and satisfaction with advising.
- pre-college variables: overall, 24 pre-college variables were tested to determine if they had a significant relationship with any of the independent or dependent variables. If they did, they were included in the regression equation. Among these variables were gender, ethnic origin, student's grade point average in high school, parents' income level, father's and mother's education, hours/week spent talking with teachers outside of class in high school, student's combined verbal and math score on SAT, and student's career aspirations at time of enrollment.

D. Final Sample

- student responses from the Spring survey were linked by social security number to the same students and their responses from the CIRP 1992 pre-college survey.
- 150 useable cases had data from both the CIRP and the Spring 1993 surveys.
- chi-square analysis showed that students in the final sample were representative of the freshman College of Arts & Sciences class with regards to socioeconomic status, academic background and ethnicity (except with regards to African-American students).

E. Data Analysis

- primary method of analysis was multiple regression.

V. Results

A. Frequency of interaction

- Students who experience more frequent informal interaction with faculty tend to experience higher academic and intellectual development and have better attitudes about faculty.

B. Types of interactions

- freshmen who discuss issues related to course matters tend to have higher intellectual development.
- freshmen who meet with teachers to get help with coursework, consult about career plans, help resolve a personal problem, discuss a campus issue or problem, and to socialize informally, tend to have better attitudes about faculty.
- freshmen who consult with teachers about career plans tend to have a higher grade point average, higher educational aspirations, and be more certain about their career goals.
- freshmen who meet with faculty to discuss a variety of topics tend to be more satisfied with their overall education.

C. Quality of interactions

- freshmen who experience a higher quality of interaction with faculty tend to have higher intellectual development, be more certain about their career choice, and be more satisfied with their education.

D. Residence Arrangement

- freshmen who live in a residential college appear to experience more frequent informal interactions with faculty.
- freshmen who live in a residential college appear to experience a higher quality of informal interaction with faculty.

E. Advising

- In general, freshmen who are more satisfied with their freshman advisor tend to be more satisfied with their overall education.

F. Results in relation to Tinto's model of institutional departure

- In general, freshmen in this study who experienced more out of classroom interactions with faculty, who experienced specific types of interactions, and who experienced higher quality interactions, also experienced higher academic performance, intentions, goals, and institutional commitments, as defined by Tinto (1987).

VI. Future Research and Practice

A. Research

- more studies are needed that focus on the freshmen year experience. These studies should not only look at the effects of frequent student-faculty interaction, but also at the kinds of interactions that appear to be important to students' overall satisfaction with college, to their learning, and in developing their values, attitudes, and career and occupational aspirations.
- more studies dealing with commuter or adult continuing students are also needed; very few studies look at the effects of student-faculty interaction on this population.

B. Practice

- Early faculty mentoring programs may be one way to foster relationships between faculty and students. Mentoring programs in which faculty "volunteer" their time, as opposed to being monetarily rewarded, may send a strong message to students that faculty do care.
- Because living in a residential college had a positive association with informal interactions with faculty, and informal interactions with faculty have been shown to have a positive association with academic performance, one could speculate from the results that living in a residential college fosters informal interactions thereby leading to greater academic performance, intentions, goals, and institutional commitments on the part of the students. In light of the research and literature, institutions that are not satisfied with their residential system and are concerned about creating an environment to foster informal communications between faculty and students, may want to think about encouraging freshmen to reside in a residential college environment.

Table 6.1 Summary of Outcomes in Relation to Tinto's Model of Institutional Departure

Independent Variables	OUTCOMES *Academic System* academic performance acad int dev./gpa	overall student-faculty interactions	intentions	goals	institutional commitments
1a: Frequency of Interaction	+*/+		+	+	+***/+
1b: Type of Interaction: discussions about...					
1. variety of topics	+**/+		+	+	+**/+**
2. course help	+/-		+	+	+**/+
3. academic plans	+/+		+	+	+/+
4. career	+/+**		+**	+**	+*/-
5.personal problem	-/+		+*	+	+*/-
6.intellectual matters	+**/+		-	-	+/+
7.campus issues	+/+		+	-	+*/+
8. to socialize	+/+		-	-	+**/+
1c: Quality of Interaction					
faculty relations	+****/+		+*	-	+/+****
faculty concern	+****/+		+	-	-/+****
2a: Residential College[a]			+**		
2c: Residential College[b]			+**/+		
2d: Residential College	+/+		-	-	+/+
3: Satisfaction w Advisor					+*

n=150 significance levels (two-tailed): *p<.1. **p<.05, ***p<.01, ****p<.001 (+/-) indicates sign of relationship

[a] see Table 5.11 for type of interaction.

[b] faculty relations/faculty concern

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- It appears that the availability of faculty to discuss many topics or socialize can have a very strong effect on students' commitment to the institution. Institutions may want to think of ways to foster early informal communication with faculty in the freshmen year as a way to quickly strengthen students' loyalty to the institution.

VII. What other programs, policies, and practices may be helpful in fostering informal communication between students and faculty? What has/has not worked on your campus?

DEFINITIONS OF SOME KEY TERMS

Dependent Variables

Academic and Intellectual development: Academic and intellectual development, in this study, is defined by two measures, a scale called academic and intellectual development and freshman year grade point average.

• **Academic and Intellectual Development Scale:** The first measure is a 5-item scale which looks at students' perceptions of their academic and intellectual growth in their freshman year. This scale was adopted from a study by Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) on informal student-faculty interaction. The five items have a 5-point Likert-type rating eliciting responses from 1 to 5, with 5 equaling "Strongly Agree" and 1 equaling "Strongly Disagree." Students were given statements such as, "Few of my courses have been intellectually stimulating," and "My interest in ideas and intellectual matters has increased since coming to this university." To arrive at values for this variable for each student, values for the 5 items were averaged The reliability (alpha) for this scale is .72.

• **Freshman Year Grade Point Average:** The second measure of academic and intellectual development is freshman year grade point average. Grade point average is measured by self-reported freshman year grade point average. Possible responses range from A (coded 4.0) to D (coded 1.9).

Attitudes about Faculty: Students' attitudes towards faculty are defined here as students' perceptions of the importance of close and personal informal communication with faculty. Feinberg (1972) developed this scale to measure student's attitudes towards faculty. Students were given statements such as, "How important is the amount of personal communication you have with your professors?," and "How important a contribution to your education is having professors participate in informal conversations and discussions with students outside of class?" The scale consists of 3-items using a Likert-type rating (responses were coded from "Not Important", equaling 1 to "Very Important" equaling 5). To arrive at values for this variable for each student, values for the 3 items were averaged. The reliability of this scale is .73.

Educational Aspirations: Educational aspirations is measured by one item asking students, "What is the highest degree you plan to obtain in your lifetime?" Student responses were coded from 1 to 6 with 1 equaling Bachelor's degree and 6 equaling Ph.D,. MD., JD, or M.B.A.

Career Certainty: Career certainty is measured by one item asking students to indicate; 1) if they definitely planned to enter a certain occupation; 2) if they were not decided yet about their occupational choice; or 3) if they had no idea at all about an occupation at this time. Student responses were coded 1 to 3, with 1 equaling a definite career choice.

Overall Satisfaction With Education: Satisfaction with education is defined here as students perceptions of how satisfied they are with their overall freshman experience. Endo and Harpel, 1982) developed a scale which included 5 items, using a 5-point Likert-type rating. Students were given statements asking them about their satisfaction with the quality, variety, and challenge of their courses, eliciting responses ranging from 5, "Strongly Agree" to 1, "Strongly Disagree." To arrive at values for this variable for each student, values for the 5 items were averaged. The reliability for this scale is .84.

Independent Variables

There are three major sets of independent variables; 1) overall frequency of informal student-faculty interaction (1 variable), 2) frequency of each type of informal student-faculty interaction (8 variables), and 3) quality of informal student-faculty interaction (2 variables), Quality of informal interaction is measured by two scales; 1)faculty concern for student development and teaching, and 2)faculty relations. There are also two supplemental independent variables in this study, residence arrangement, which is an independent variable used in hypothesis #2, and satisfaction with advising, which is an independent variable used in hypothesis #3.

Overall frequency of informal student-faculty interaction. Overall frequency of informal interaction is defined here as the average number of times students met with professors outside of class (for 10 minutes or more) to discuss a variety of topics, such as, intellectual and course-related matters and campus issues, get help with coursework, to resolve a personal problem, to consult about academic plans and career aspirations, and to socialize informally. This variable was measured by a scale which consists of 8 items, each using a 5 point Likert-type rating. The items were taken from a study by Pascarella and Terenzini (1981). Students were asked questions such as, "How many times have your met with a professor outside of class to consult about your future career?" and "How many times have you met with a professor outside of class to discuss intellectual or course-related matters?" Students were asked to include only discussions of 10 minutes or more. To arrive at values for this variable for each student, values for the 8 items were averaged. The reliability for this scale is .80.

Type of informal student-faculty interaction: Here, each of the 8 types of informal student-faculty interaction mentioned above serves as separate independent variables.

Quality of informal student-faculty interaction. Quality of informal student-faculty interaction is defined here in two ways and measured by two scales. "Faculty relations" is defined as the students' perception of their opportunities to meet informally with faculty along with the evaluation of those meetings. "Faculty concern for student development and teaching" is defined as students' perceptions of how concerned faculty are in the individual development of their students and how well they teach. Pascarella and Terenzini (1980) devised two scales to measure quality of

informal interaction; 1) Faculty Concern for Student Development and Teaching, and 2) Faculty Relations. The first scale, Faculty Relations, consists of five items. Students were given statements such as, "Few of the faculty members I have had contact with are generally interested in students." and "Few of the faculty members 1 have had contact with are generally outstanding or superior teachers." Possible responses range from "Strongly Disagree" (coded 1) to "Strongly Agree" (coded 4). To arrive at values for this variable for each student, values for the 5 items were averaged. The reliability for this scale is .82.

The second scale, Faculty Concern, consists of five items. Students were given statements such as, "My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence in my personal growth, values, and attitudes" and "My nonclassroom interactions with faculty have had a positive influence on my intellectual growth and interest in ideas." Possible responses range from "Strongly Disagree (coded 1) to "Strongly Agree" (coded 4). To arrive at values for this variable for each student, values for the 5 items were averaged. The reliability for this scale is .72.

Supplemental Independent Variables

Residence Arrangement: A supplemental independent variable, residence arrangement, is included in the analysis to determine if the effects of living in a residential college with have a direct, positive effect with informal student-faculty interaction and on the six dependent variables. Residence arrangement is coded as a dummy variable with 1 equaling living in a residential college and 0 equaling all other living arrangements.

Satisfaction with Freshman Adviser: Satisfaction with Freshman Adviser is defined as how pleased students are with their adviser's helpfulness, availability, knowledge, interest in them as a student and overall satisfaction with their adviser. This scale consists of 5 items used a 4-point Likert-type rating. For example, students were given statements such as, "I am satisfied with my Freshman Adviser's interest in me as a student." and "I am satisfied with my Freshman Adviser's knowledgeability." Responses were coded Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1). Values for this variable were arrived at by averaging the 5 items. The reliability for this scale is high, .92

Descriptive Statistics: means and standard deviations
n=150

Variables	*description*	*mean*	*S.D.*
dependent variables			
academic/intellectual development			
acintdv	academic/intell. dev. scale, 5 items, 1 to 5 scale	3.46	.71
gpa	self-reported, 1.9-4.0, 4=A	3.00	.48
attitudes about faculty			
att	3 items, 1 to 5 scale,	3.93	.87
educational aspirations			
highdeg	1 item, 1 to 6 scale	5.55	.57
career certainty			
occ	1 item, 1 to 3 scale	.25	.44
satisfaction with education			
sat	6 items, 1 to 5 scale	3.57	.72
independent variables			
frequency of informal student-faculty interaction			
freqint	8 items, 0 to 5 scale, 5=>4	.90	.80
type of interaction			
freqint1	0 to 5 scale, variety of topics	1.59	1.51
freqint2	0 to 5 scale, coursework	1.56	1.46
freqint3	0 to 5 scale, academic plans	1.03	1.36
freqint4	0 to 5 scale, career	.46	.96
freqint5	0 to 5 scale, personal problem	.15	.71
freqint6	0 to 5 scale, intell/course related	1.50	1.55
freqint7	0 to 5 scale, campus issue/problem	.207	.69
freqint8	0 to 5 scale, socialize	.67	1.26
quality of informal student-faculty interaction			
faccon	faculty concern 5 items, 1 to 5 scale	3.42	.64
facrel	faculty relations/interactions, 5 items, 1 to 5 scale	2.88	.84
supplemental independent variables			
satadv	satisfaction with adviser, 5 items, 1 to 5 scale	3.25	1.08
rescoll	residence arrangement, residential college=1, 0= other	.39	.49
pre-college variables			
demographics			
male	male=1, female=0	.41	.49
white	white=1, other=0	.69	.46
ademic background			
high school gpa	average h.s. grade point average, 1.9-4.0	3.86	.22

Descriptive Statistics: means and standard deviations
n=150

Variables	*description*	*mean*	*S.D.*
satcomp	combined satv&satm, 820-1520	1231.00	131.00
ses			
income	parents income, 1-14, 14= over $200,000	9.97	2.96
father's educ	father's education, 1-8, 8=grad. degree	6.46	1.97
mother's educ	mother's education, 1-8, 8=grad. degree	5.91	1.81
activities			
hpw103	hours/ wk talking to teachers out of class	2.67	.93
future activity 21	be satisfied w college, 1-4, 4=very good chance	3.77	.42
hpw104	hours/ wk exercising/ sports	4.60	1.80
hpw107	hours/ wk volunteer work	2.49	1.43
hpw108	hours/ wk student clubs/ groups	3.91	1.73
act	acad,/ soc. activities in h.s., 1 to 3, 3=freq.	2.02	.28
fut act	poss. future act, 1 to 4, 4=v good chance	2.47	.44
aspirations			
degasp92	highest degree planned, 1-6, 6=ph.d., m.d., j.d, m.b.a.	5.59	.75
aspirations	leadership/ community asp., 1 to 4, 4=essential	2.37	.47
physical sciences	aspiring career. ;1=phys. sci., 2=others	.40	.49
motivations concerning college			
reasonec	economic reasons for attending, 1 to 3, 3=v. imp.	2.65	.51
reasonac	academic reasons for attending, 1 to 3, 3=v. imp.	2.62	.37
chooseac	academic reasons for choos. MU, 1 to 3, 3=v. imp	2.58	.60
choice	NU as #1 choice of coll., 1-4 scale,4 1st choice	3.57	.74
numapply	# other coll. applications, 1 to 7, 7=6 or more	4.91	1.93
student self-ratings			
ratesoc	social ratings, 8 items, 1 to 5, 5=highest 10%	3.84	.56
rateac	academic ratings, 6 items, 1 to 5, 5=highest 10%	4.25	.47

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"Does it Matter to Matter? The Role of Involvement and Mattering for Returning Adult Undergraduate Students"

Miriam Rosalyn Diamond

Abstract

Considerable debate exists as to whether the climate of an educational institution is important in the experience of returning adult students. This-is study focused on two aspects of climate: involvement and mattering. Involvement was conceptualized as the amount of contact a student has with others in the educational setting (faculty, classmates), and mattering was defined as the extent to which the student feels significant to these people.

In accordance with the ecological perspective, this investigation occurred at two levels of analysis: the institutional and the individual. Qualitative and quantitative methods were employed. Three bachelor degree-granting programs that serve returning adults participated. Site observations, interviews, and a review of brochures were conducted to rank these programs in their philosophy toward and provision of opportunities for returning students' involvement and mattering.

Questionnaires were distributed to students in each of the programs. Items included involvement, mattering, student satisfaction, intent to persist, and control variables (including number and ages of children and number of hours worked weekly for pay). Respondents were asked to write short essays describing a time when they felt they

did and did not matter in their institution. Multiple regressions were employed to analyze data.

Findings indicate that although involvement and mattering are related, they have different antecedents and outcomes. Involvement appears to be higher among full-time students than part-timers. This study suggests that involvement predicts mattering,

which, in turn, influences the extent to which students are likely to be satisfied with and intend to persist in their programs. Mattering seems to be directly predicted by the philosophy of and opportunities provided by the organization. The number and ages of children and the length of commute one has alters the amount of mattering reported, according to this investigation.

As the numbers of returning adult students in colleges increases, it becomes more important to learn about this population and the way to best serve them. This study is an attempt to fill some of the gaps.

Community on Campus:
Faculty - Adult Student Interaction
Miriam R. Diamond, Ph.D.

- A. The Issue:

  1. Increasing numbers of returning adult students.

  2. Persistence among this population is a concern.

  3. The building of community may be more difficult for members of this group (more competing demands and obligations).

- B. The Questions:

  1. To what extent do returning adult undergraduates become involved with and feel they matter to others - particularly faculty - in their learning environments?

  2. Do the amounts and types of interaction with faculty have an impact on student satisfaction with and commitment to complete their degrees?

  3. Are these conditions affected by the structure provided by colleges and programs?

  4. What are the implications for resource allocation and prioritization in adult degree programs?

- C. The Study:

  1. Surveys completed by 110 students age 24 and older in matriculated in one of 3 adult undergraduate programs (55% return rate).

  2. Items included:

     a. number of out-of-classroom contacts with faculty during the last 2 months (e.g. in cafeteria, before or after class, by telephone),

     b. a Likert-type scale where students indicated how much they felt they mattered to faculty (after Schlossberg et al, 1989, with items such as "Faculty members are available to talk with me if I need to ask a question"),

     c. short essay questions where students described incidents whereby they

felt they did and did not matter to others in the institution, and the implications thereof, and

d. multiple-choice items (after Chapman and Pascarella, 1983) on the degree of satisfaction with and intent to persist in the program.

- D. Findings:

1. A higher level of interaction (quantity - as indicated by number of contacts) was only slightly related to feeling significant to faculty members.

2. Students reporting a stronger feeling of mattering (quality) to faculty were more likely to be committed to program of study.

3. Instances of high mattering described included faculty extending themselves by taking time outside of class to encourage and give feedback regarding student performance. Also included were letters congratulating them on successful performances in class, and faculty-initiated telephone calls to check in with students who were dealing with family crises.

4. Students reporting low rates of feeling they mattered described their colleges as impersonal bureaucracies, reported greater rates of isolation, and felt that faculty were unapproachable on an interpersonal level.

5. Programs were students reported higher levels of mattering to faculty put greater emphasis on TRAINING faculty to work with and be sensitive to the situations of adult students.

- E. Implications:

As administrators, what can and should we do to create an environment that promotes positive faculty - adult student interaction?

CONCLUSION

In concluding, we would like to offer some questions that student affairs professionals, in their roles as educators, might consider.

- As student affairs professionals, what is our role in promoting student-faculty interactions?
- What are some examples of "best practice" programs that promote out-of-classroom interactions between students and faculty?
- What programs, practices and policies can our institutions create to foster informal communication and contact between students and faculty?
- With part-time or adjunct faculty, how can we encourage greater quality of informal student-faculty interaction?
- These studies confirm the importance of student-faculty interaction during students' first year of study, yet they also illuminate the intimidation students feel indicate that students are intimidated by faculty in their first year. By the time they were seniors, students reported being less intimidated by faculty because they had had the opportunity to have positive interactions with faculty. How can student affairs professionals help bridge the distance between the intimidation that first year students might feel and the confidence that senior year students have approaching faculty? How can student affairs professionals encourage the occurrence of more positive interactions with faculty earlier in students' academic careers?
- How can we help sensitize faculty regarding the concerns and needs of adult students?
- How can we help faculty become aware of the messages that they convey to students about their interest and commitment to out-of-classroom learning?
- In our own institution, what are the barriers that currently exist to fostering informal student-faculty interaction?

As the theme of the 1996 National NASPA Conference "When a new dawn reveals a landscape...Redefining Learning" indicates, student affairs professionals are increasingly viewing their roles as educators and as collaborators with faculty. Clearly, student affairs professionals have the potential to significantly influence the occurrence of out-of-classroom interactions with faculty.

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